

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MANILA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 031559

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, RP

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE POLITICAL PRISONERS

1. CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN PHILIPPINES AND IN PARTICULAR IN QUESTION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS HAS MOUNTED STEADILY OVER LAST FEW WEEKS. WHILE MANY OF THESE INQUIRIES UNFORTUNATELY CONTINUE TO BE TIED TO LOPEZ/OSMENA CASE, INTEREST IN BROADER PICTURE SEEMS TO BE GROWING. UNLESS STEPS ARE TAKEN BY GOP TO RESOLVE THE POLITICAL PRISONER QUESTION, GOP MAY FACE VERY ROUGH SLEDDING IN THE NEW CONGRESS.

2. DEPARTMENT IS NOW PREPARING PRELIMINARY ANSWER TO INQUIRY FROM CONGRESSMAN FRASER ON QUESTION OF WHETHER THERE HAVE BEEN "GROSS VIOLATIONS" OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PHILIPPINES AS DEFINED IN SECTION 502B(A) OF THE 1974 FAA AND, IF SO, WHAT WE INTEND TO DO ABOUT IT. (MATERIALS BEING POUCHED.) WE HAVE ALSO RECEIVED SHARPLY WORDED LETTER FROM CONGRESSMAN BURTON COMPLAINING OF CONFLICTING REPORTS HE IS RECEIVING FROM PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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ON OSMENA/LOPEZ CASE. WE ALSO HAVE AN INQUIRY FROM SENATOR

GEORGE MCGOVERN ASKING "I WONDER WHAT STEPS THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS TAKEN TO ENCOURAGE THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE MR. LOPEZ AND MR. OSMENA EVERY MEASURE OF JUSTICE."

-- MOUNTING CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST INDICATES HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE MAY LOOM LARGER DURING COMING MONTHS THAN PREVIOUSLY. PROBLEMS THIS COULD CREATE IN OUR RELATIONS ARE EVIDENT, PARTICULARLY IF CRITICS, IN ADDITION TO CONDEMNING APPARENT USG INACTION REGARDING POLITICAL PRISONERS ISSUE, ZERO IN ON HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECTS OF MUSLIM SITUATION AND ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY USG AS AIDING GOP SUPPRESSION OF MUSLIM MINORITY BY PROVIDING MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

4. BELIEVE EMBASSY SHOULD BE AWARE OF ABOVE IN DEALING WITH GOP ON THIS SUBJECT. INGERSOLL

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